When in Illyria: Relative Temporality, Gender, and Sexuality in *Twelfth Night*

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Introduction

In William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, Viola, after contemplating her difficult position in Illyria as both man and woman, looks to larger forces than herself, pleading "O Time, thou must untangle this, not I. / It is too hard a knot for me t' untie (2.2.40-41). Her direct address to time, and her plea for that time to influence events involving the courtships around her, exemplifies the way she views time as the ultimate force to appeal to concerning matters of courtship. Viola has come to Illyria after a shipwreck, the consequences of which never seem to leave the atmosphere of *Twelfth Night*, thereby connecting her narrative to the sea and its lack of temporal regulation. In doing so, she is thrown out of the normal bounds of time, as the temporality of Illyria, with its connection to this sea narrative, is wholly inextricable from the subjective experiences of those who reside there. To these characters, time is just as powerful as it is open to interpretation. The Countess Olivia, the shipwrecked Antonio and Sebastian, Count Orsino, and the disguised Viola, under the name "Cesario," all test the boundaries of time's reach, most glaringly within the realms of gender and sexuality.[1] *Twelfth Night's* infamously tangled homoerotic relationships and ambiguously defined gender roles result from this "relative" time, as it is this setting that facilitates these explorations. But even with time's relaxed restrictions, the way *Twelfth Night's* characters pinpoint time as integral to their sexual desires and notions of gender. They invoke, reference, and wield time in ways that reflect the nuanced early modern conceptions of time and its interaction with other elements of human nature. The relationships and cross-dressing that characterize *Twelfth Night* also reveal the ways

[1] As this paper will make the claim that Viola and Cesario both exist within this character, the name and pronouns by which this character is referred to will change based on the moment being described. When Viola is expressing the interests of her female persona, she will be referred to as such. When Cesario, in his male persona, is expressing his interests, he will be referred to by this name and by male pronouns.

in which the play's temporality works dually, as both an omnipotent force and a subjective experience to be manipulated.

The Relative Time of Illyria

Understanding Renaissance conceptions of time is essential to understanding its role in Shakespeare's plays, and consequently, how this time interacts with gender and sexuality. The temporality of *Twelfth Night* demonstrates a culture with many varying theories on how time can function on a theoretical and individual level. As early modern institutions increasingly developed around clocks and hours of the day, time itself necessarily became standardized. But even as this standardization made time a more objective force to the Renaissance individual, there also existed a sense, displayed in various sources, that time could be dependent on physical setting as well as the experience of the individual. Shakespeare, in his plays, frequently approaches this question of how time can be both regulatory body and a subjective experience. His plays often demonstrate a simultaneous interest in how time functions on different theoretical levels while also allowing the passage of time through progressing scenes to be indistinct to the audience. *Twelfth Night* is one such play, where Illyria and its connection to the sea contribute to an atmosphere that encourages a relative temporality, fragmented between individual experiences. Relative time, in this instance, can be understood as time that is dependent on the setting and characters that experience it, marking temporality as "relative" to its context. With this understanding of relative time, one can acquire an understanding of how these characters express their gender and sexuality in relation to this time.

The early modern era, with advancing timekeeping technologies and European exploration, encouraged discussions around time's inherent nature. The rapid spread of public clocks in the fourteenth century inevitably led to the institutionalization of time within local

governments, schools, and centers of commerce. This lent time an air of regulation, as ordered hours, rather than the looser restrictions of sunlight, became commonplace (Rossum). But even as time became increasingly regularity and omnipresent, its connections to subjective experience and setting tempered this move toward the wholly objective. The same public clocks that marked this objective time were often inaccurate, and interaction with new cultures and their own concepts of time complicated this objective definition. On a theoretical level, this heightened awareness of time's varying forms, and its constant presence in the form of institutions, meant a greater awareness of time's passage on the whole. In his "Time" essay in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern European History,* Gerhard Dohrn-van Rossum argues the urgency with which early modern individuals view time, and how "time was often conceived as a destructive power and fame as a desirable way to overcome it. Time was also precious, constantly slipping away" (Rossum). Shakespeare's plays exemplify this tension between time as both a force to be "overcome" and something to be savored, and so the Renaissance perceptions of time, in all their many forms, are essential to an understanding of this time in *Twelfth Night*.

Shakespeare's plays, on the whole, introduce a myriad of views on temporality, and nowhere is this discussion more explicit than in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. Rosalind, in her disguise as the male Ganymede, begins her courtship of Orlando within the Forest of Arden by inquiring "I pray you, what is it o'clock?" (3.2.293). Orlando, incredulous, responds "You should ask me, what time o' day. There's / no clock in the forest" (3.2.294-295). In this exchange, several theories of time are presented for the audience. Rosalind seeks to gauge an objective and precise time; she asks for a minute and hour. Orlando, in response, presents his own view of time as it exists in the Forest of Arden, a "greenworld," as passing only in general "time o' days." In her attempts at creating a regulatory time within the forest, Rosalind actually

reveals the elasticity of this time, depending on the individual, more than any strict way of measuring it. Exchanges such as this exemplify the way that time exists in the Forest of Arden, a time that is fragmented in to several different subjective experiences of its passing. This concept is made explicit by Rosalind later in the same scene, as she describes the way time "ambles," "trots," and "gallops" for different individuals, depending on their situation. She is echoed by Jacques, in his famous "All the World's a Stage" speech. His description of how "one man in his time plays many parts" and how time affects the individual in varying ways throughout their life, displays the forest's relative time (2.7.141). These overt references to the relative nature of temporality within this setting make *As You Like It* a particularly effective example of this temporal concept.

These speeches, and temporality in *As You Like It*, have been studied extensively for their nuanced approaches to this topic. The research around *As You Like It* supports this idea of time as subjective and therefore relative. In "No Clock in the Forest": Time in *As You like It*," Jay L. Halio compares Rosalind and Jacque's speeches, arguing "In this way, she [Rosalind] more thoroughly accounts for *duration*, or the perception of time, which, unlike Jacque's portrait of our common destiny, is not the same for everyone" (Halio 205). Halio not only acknowledges the way time is perceived differently between Jacques and Rosalind, but also between all individuals. Overall, Halio marks his opinion of time in the Forest of Arden as a place of pastoral idealism in opposition to the refined but evil court, where the forest's idealism can flourish in an "antique world" of merry men and "timelessness." Later, Rawdon Wilson, in "The Way to Arden: Attitudes Toward Time in *As You Like It*," updates Halio's argument to include a temporality of the public and private spheres, where the forest of *As You Like It* works as a combination of private spheres culminating in a shift toward timelessness (Wilson 16). Halio and

Wilson both agree, however, that time in the forest is distinct in its connection to subjective experience.

Extensive research has therefore been created around the temporality of *As You Like It*, and the "greenworld" that predominates its discussions of time, but where this research is rich around this play's temporality, the equally relative time of *Twelfth Night*, though different in form, is largely unexplored. In *As You Like It*, the characters exit court life and descend upon the forest, escaping both the evils of court culture and the strictly linear progression of time. *Twelfth Night*, though lacking this mass movement, also features characters that are thrown from their routine into a world that exists, due to its setting, with varying definitions of time. Where the Forest of Arden facilitates the relative time of *As You Like It*, it is Illyria, a place of myth and on the periphery of English consciousness, that performs this role in *Twelfth Night*. Illyria is also closely related to the sea that borders it, as the characters frequently reference their own and Illyria's connections to this sea. This maritime setting is conducive to fragmented time, based on its history with exploration and lack of regulatory institutions. A combination of these factors results in the relative time of *As You Like It* being reflected not as explicitly but just as strongly within the narrative of *Twelfth Night*.

The title of *Twelfth Night* itself prepares the audience for a discussion of time's place in Renaissance life. This holiday that the play invokes is one of excess and revelry, taking place on the last night of Christmas and often traditionally celebrated with a "king" and "queen" of *Twelfth Night* chosen from among the masses (Greenblatt 1908). This holiday then has certain implications for the play's themes, both social and temporal. For one, the idea of a night of revelry necessarily emphasizes a lack of normal inhibitions around social norms. An individual might be prompted, therefore, to consider how these norms regulate everyday life, as well as the

extent to which these norms can be violated. The idea of a "king" and "queen" being chosen from any individual regardless of rank also prompts the questioning of these norms, in the idea that social boundaries can, at least temporarily, be overcome. While this holiday invites these social trespasses, however, it also necessarily limits them within its definition as a holiday. *Twelfth Night* is set within one day; its ending is predetermined and therefore the break of social norms is intimately bound up with how time allows and limits them. The title of this play therefore invokes freed social norms allowed within a certain, but inevitably conclusive amount of time.

Another instant connection with temporality in *Twelfth Night* is its setting, Illyria. Illyria was "the Greek and Roman name for the eastern Adriatic coast" that had, by Shakespeare's time, sunk into myth, and so did not suggest "a real country to Shakespeare's audience" (Greenblatt, 1.1). This setting was isolated by a geographical and historical (or temporal) position in the Renaissance mind. This setting, with its place in history, reflects the "old world" invoked by Duke Senior in *As You Like It*, where history and myth are conflated in to a place of fantasy. Illyria therefore, to a Renaissance audience, would suggest a place of liberality, without the established norms that governed life in early modern England.

Within the play itself, Illyria is inseparable from the sea that propels so much of its plot. Viola and Sebastian, of course, are driven to Illyria by way of the sea, and their opening scenes feature the coast of Illyria, where the twins separately come to terms with the reality of their shipwreck. The twins never truly exit this shipwreck narrative; the other characters' references to the sea, and the way in which the wreck continues to factor in to their experiences of Illyria, prevents this exit. By the end of the play, for example, Viola's return to being performatively female is prevented by the Captain still holding her "women's weeds," the same Captain who

had saved Viola from the shipwreck. The fact that Viola's ability to perform as female begins and ends with her experiences on the sea ties this gender presentation to Illyria itself. If the sea is bound up in Illyria and the characters that inhabit it, the sea was also a place of suspended temporality within the early modern imagination. The ocean existed, like Illyria, as a place outside the normal restrictions of time. In "Time, Gender, and Nonhuman Worlds," Emily Kuffner, Elizabeth Crachiolo, and Dyani Johns Taff explain how the sea, and travel through the it, were seen as altered periods of temporality. They contend that "for some early moderns, those who ventured out to sea could be deemed neither alive nor dead and as such, existed outside normative conceptions of time" (Kuffner et al. 70). The ocean, of course, lacked the regulatory institutions that had brought objective time to the forefront of the Renaissance imagination, as it lacked public clocks. Instead, in the European age of exploration, the sea was a place of altered temporality, dictated by natural processes like the sun and by the sailors who experienced time on an individual level. *Twelfth Night* setting facilitates a loosened temporality and therefore a temporality bound up in the relative time of the individual.

Within this setting of relaxed societal norms and altered temporality, normal markers of how time passes break down, and the plot of *Twelfth Night* moves forward without clear guidance for the audience as to how much time has specifically passed between events. This is not an unusual tendency in Shakespeare's plays, as many of his works lay out a scheme of events that often ignore concrete indicators of time altogether. *Twelfth Night* is one such play, as time is referenced and agonized over, but is never clearly laid out in a way that connects Illyria to the norms of the early modern era. Any attempts to reassert a structured, objective time are actively resisted by these characters, such as in response to Malvolio's vehement insistence on observance of normal hours. He asks the riotous Sir Toby and Andrew Aguecheek, in their late-

night merry-making, if there is “no respect of place, persons, nor time in you?” (2.3.92-93). In these attempts to present time as a governing force that must be respected, Malvolio is largely alone. Instead, various characters present their interpretations of Illyria’s relative time in a myriad of ways, from a concept to be ignored to, in Viola’s case, a force with ultimate control over fate. These interpretations are united, however, in their subjective natures, as all are dependent on the individual perception of time. Illyria therefore works as a setting ripe for explorations of time’s functions, allowing characters to present a broad range of ideas on the topic.

This relative time, expressed by the characters of *Twelfth Night*, is most often done in reference to the ways in which time interacts within the homoerotic courtships and various cross-dressing schemes that dominate this play. After Viola’s initial appearance on the coast of Illyria, her next appearance is as Cesario three days later, explained in Valentine’s comment that Orsino “hath known you but three days and already you are no stranger” (1.4.3-4). This comment works dually, filling in the time that has elapsed for Viola and connecting this time to her relationship with Orsino. The temporal jump emphasizes the speed with which Viola has ingratiated herself in to this court, marking her no longer as a “stranger” in a foreign land. From this scene onwards, however, very few hints are given as to how time is passing in Illyria, and what little clues the audience is given are mostly within the context of courtship. Olivia, in seeking to persuade Cesario to consider her suit, often delays Cesario’s rejections by entreating him to “come again tomorrow” (3.4.225). Their next meeting, then, is most often assumed to be the following day, but the lack of structure around this temporality, and its dependence on the framework of these courtships, emphasizes its subjectivity.

A return to objective time, however, at least partially takes place by the end of *Twelfth Night*. Temporal information, which, until act five, has been dependent on passing remarks between characters, is given in definite terms concurrent with a general shift back to heteronormativity. Within Antonio's explanation is the information that he has been traveling with Sebastian for "three months before, [with] no int'rim" (5.1.93-94). This lends context to the entirety of the timeline of *Twelfth Night*, and signals the reemergence of temporal boundaries. This reemergence continues. Where previously, the audience had been privy to little of Viola and Sebastian's past in Messaline, in act five their reunion divulges the information of the death of their mother "when Viola from her birth / Had numbered thirteen years" (5.1.257-258). This shift, where objective time is once again acknowledged, correlates with a trend toward the heterosexual, seen in the marriages of Olivia and Sebastian, and the promised marriage between Viola and Orsino. This effectively ends these characters' exploration of the liberties of subjective time through these homoerotic feelings.

This play pairs a relative temporality with relative sexuality. *Twelfth Night's* Illyria, though not as explicitly separated from court life as in *As You Like It*, nonetheless features a world temporally distinct from the regulatory time of society. Given this space where time is subject to individual interpretations, the characters interpret gender and sexuality on a similarly individual basis. Sebastian and Antonio, in their travels together on the coast, appear part-way through this play and express deeply homoerotic sentiments toward each other, all the while explaining the way time affects their sentiments. Viola, Olivia, and Orsino, in their triangle of affection, similarly bind their ideas of time with how they navigate their homoerotic expressions of desire. The setting of Illyria, with its connection to the sea and place on the periphery of the European world, facilitates this move to relative time, which the characters then express

throughout their attempts to navigate this setting. The varying subjective interpretations of time in Illyria constantly inform these characters' actions in regard to their gender and sexuality, and even as a partial return to objective time takes place in act five, an only partial return to heterosexuality mirrors this.

Antonio and Sebastian's Homoerotic Temporality

Antonio and Sebastian maintain a deeply homoerotic relationship throughout *Twelfth Night*, and frequently reference their perspectives on the passage of time as integral to this relationship. This relationship is intimately connected to the sea, as Antonio and Sebastian spend an initially unspecified amount of time traveling in the wake of the shipwreck. In their expressions of devotion, both men refer to how this time together was formative for their intimacy. This lack of objective time continues through their arrival in Illyria, and the two men continue to weave their subjective views of time in to their evident desire for each other. Of course, Sebastian, as the play moves back toward objective time, marries Olivia, and yet his discourse with the Countess never compares with the expressions of love with which he addresses Antonio. A return to heterosexuality is therefore only partially complete. Antonio and Sebastian's homoeroticism is formed and perpetuated in this space that lacks objective time, and their own subjective time works to perpetuate their homoerotic desire above all other relationships these two men might share with others.

The expressions of affection that constantly pass between Sebastian and Antonio emphasize a deep, and, at times sexual, relationship. Though Antonio risks violent repercussions for his appearance in Illyria, when asked by Sebastian why he would risk following him, Antonio responds that "My desire, / more sharp than filèd steel, did spur me forth" (3.3.3-5). Antonio emphatically asserts his attraction to Sebastian in this speech. His desire is not only present, but

"sharp," speaking to the intensity of his feelings. He also makes himself a slave to this desire, as it spurs him rather than being spurred by him, and so attests to Antonio's lack of control over his feelings for Sebastian. Sebastian too engages in these exclamations of commitment. Upon reuniting towards the end of the play, Sebastian exclaims "Antonio. O, my dear Antonio! / How have the hours racked and tortured me / Since I have lost thee!" (5.1.229-231). Sebastian first exclaims Antonio's name, and then feels this name needs amending with the phrase "my dear." He mirrors Antonio's violent metaphor for desire, marking this longing as mutual and once again implying a deep intensity of feeling. These words reinforce the actions that Antonio and Sebastian perform as a testament to their mutual affection, as they continually make attempts to save each other from their dangerous circumstances. Their expressions of love are then spoken with the knowledge of their dangerous circumstances, which they incorporate in to their language using violent imagery. Antonio and Sebastian develop a discourse of homoeroticism within their dangerous circumstances, a discourse that emphasizes deep devotion.

These circumstances around Antonio and Sebastian, specifically the shipwreck and the subjective time of Illyria, define their relationship. As we have seen, the sea is a place where time exists in an altered form, and the fact that Antonio and Sebastian's relationship forms within this context creates a connection between these temporal circumstances and the homoerotic attraction that they share. In explaining their meeting, Antonio describes his rescue of Sebastian "from the rude sea's enraged and foamy mouth / Did I redeem; a wrack past hope he was. / His life I gave him and thereto did add / My love, without retention or restraint (5.1.76-79). Antonio anthropomorphizes the sea by describing its "foamy mouth," and therefore grants it intention. Its monstrous characterization highlights its untamed nature, as Antonio clearly views the sea with apprehension. But he also credits the sea with leading to his current relationship with Sebastian.

He not only saves Sebastian, but he grants him his love. By creating a parallel between their circumstances and his affection for Sebastian, Antonio reinforces the connection between his homoerotic feelings and the setting of *Twelfth Night*. Within Illyria itself, Sebastian refers to how time seems to lack any regulation in asking "what relish is this? How runs the stream? / Or I am mad, or else this is a dream (4.1.63-64). His question is prompted by the confusing entanglements stemming from his closeness in appearance to Viola. He attempts to interpret this confusion in a stream metaphor, implying that he feels as if he is being pulled along by events rather than controlling them. Sebastian acknowledges the way Illyria seems to work outside the normal restraints of society, recognizing that it may only be his subjective experience that matters in such a space, an experience that stems from his own mind in the form of a dream. A dream suggests a state of altered or erased time, and a time that is wholly subjective. By invoking this metaphor for his circumstances, Sebastian once again comments on time's peculiar functions in Illyria. Both Sebastian and Antonio recognize how their circumstances deviate from the norm, and attempt to interpret this new norm in varying ways.

Within their relationship, Antonio and Sebastian make frequent references to the way time formed their current intimacy. Antonio describes the beginning of their relationship and how "for three months before, / No int'rim, not a minute's vacancy, / Both day and night did we keep company" (5.1.93-95). This explanation serves to distinguish Sebastian and Cesario for the other characters, but it also reveals Antonio's perception of how his connection with Sebastian is directly correlated to the extended time they have spent together. He categorizes their time together in terms of months and minutes, as well as "day and night," or in both an artificial (created by humans) and natural sense. These alternating methods reveal Antonio's nuanced

view of temporality, where it exists on both the level of the artificial and objective, as well as the natural.

Earlier in *Twelfth Night*, though later in Antonio and Sebastian's journey, the two men walk through Illyria and make frequent reference to how time seems susceptible to their will. When Antonio suggests they end their jaunt by seeking lodgings, Sebastian insists that "I am not weary, and tis long to night" (3.3.22). Sebastian speaks of time generally, in terms of day and night rather than in minutes and hours. In doing so, he seeks to prolong their experience together. Night, or the time of day that could curtail their exploits, insists Sebastian, is not yet upon them. Later, when Antonio offers his purse to Sebastian while they are separated, Sebastian once again wields time, by promising to hold it "for an hour" (3.3.52). By setting a limit on the amount of time that he will borrow his money, Sebastian tacitly insists on their reunion. He seeks to assure himself that only an hour will separate the two men, and in doing so exposes the value he places on time as constructive for this relationship. Antonio, in the same situation, also makes reference to the way time can curtail or allow their current activities. He insists that they wait to enjoy the town until "tomorrow, sir" (3.3.21). This delay, and his respectful address, imply Antonio's belief that their intimacy can be prolonged by suspension. Of course, it is possible that Antonio is nervous about being in a town as a wanted man. His earlier testaments to his affections, however, and his later risks, all suggest that he is more interested in prolonging these interactions, rather than safeguarding his own person. This emphasizes his devotion in this act over his fear. To these two men, the absence of objective time serves as both an opportunity for varying interpretations of time's abilities as well as a chance to extend their time together.

But while Antonio and Sebastian utilize a lack of objective time, they are also aware of the ultimate power of time to reestablish itself. Antonio later declares his intention to secure

lodgings “whiles you beguile the time” (3.3.44). His words hint at his belief that time is a force in need of beguiling. This suggests an awareness of the ways time can limit actions, and contrasts with Sebastian and Antonio’s earlier utilization of time to prolong this journey. In this way, Sebastian and Antonio both utilize and reject time’s influence on their shared experience. When Antonio is later arrested while declaring his devotion and feelings of betrayal to a confused Viola, the soldiers attempt to break off his words by declaring that “the time goes by” (3.4.383). Their concern with quickly apprehending Antonio points to a more general awareness of temporality, and the way this temporality can be used to curtail homoerotic expressions of love even as it allows room for them.

Antonio and Sebastian display an acute awareness of time as influential within their expressions of love for each other. Their devotion is clear, as they express love in both word and deed throughout this play in a way that Sebastian’s later heterosexual union never rivals. Both men acknowledge the extent of this devotion as stemming from their time together following the shipwreck and continuing within the relative time of Illyria. Antonio and Sebastian both acknowledge how time is both an avenue to extend their relationship and a concept that, in its objective form, could curtail it instead. In this way, their relationship reveals how an understanding of this relative time is essential to understanding the relative sexuality of *Twelfth Night*.

Viola, Cesario, and the Duality of Youth

Time and its influence on the relationships in Illyria are not limited to Antonio and Sebastian, but also extends over the convoluted love triangle of Viola, Olivia, and Orsino. This complicated dynamic stems from Viola’s cross-dressing, as she blurs her gender and subsequently upsets the balance of courtship throughout Illyria. This cross-dressing, which Viola repeatedly explains

stems from necessity, results in her shift away from the gender binary, a shift confirmed by the other characters' confusion as to her gender presentation. This place in between gender extends, according to many of the characters, from her youth, a term by which they repeatedly address her. This term also carries additional temporal implications, placing her gender under the direct influence of relative time. In wrestling with her gender as presentative and ephemeral, she often invokes time as a force that she believes will guide her closer to the gender binary and, consequently, to heterosexuality. So while the relative time of Illyria creates space for Viola's gender experimentation, Viola's belief in its ultimate plans to curb these experimentations also place it in the role of a policing force. In this way, Viola espouses the early modern's complicated view of time and demonstrates how time is a force that is invested in gender identity.

Though Viola often insists that the intent of her disguise is purely for survival, the way she views herself as dually male and female frequently presents itself to the audience. Upon washing up on Illyria's coast, Viola responds to the Captain's description of this new country by asking him to help "conceal me what I am, and be my aid / For such disguise as haply shall become / the form of my intent" (1.2.56-56-58). Her motivations, in this speech, of course point to a utilitarian aspect of this cross-dressing. Here, Viola asks the captain to help her conceal "what I am," implying an unequivocal opinion on her true gender as female. She emphasizes the way this disguise is meant to be a means to an end in her explanation that her disguise will become "the form of my intent." Viola asserts that she seeks to manipulate disguise, not her gender, for her ends in Illyria. But several circumstances complicate this seemingly simple view of her gender change. For one, the Captain explains that Lady Olivia has refused the courtship of Orsino and "hath abjured the sight / And company of men" (1.2.41-42). These restrictions, of course, would

not exclude Viola, a gentlewoman in search of aid, from presenting herself to Olivia. But Viola, instead of pursuing this course, immediately moves to cross-dressing as the only viable alternative. Her eagerness and unwavering commitment to this gender-bending from this point forward speaks to at least a latent interest in exploring the way gender can be manipulated. Her initial description of this disguise as stemming solely from necessity begins, later in *Twelfth Night*, to make way for her interest in how she has come to embody the gray space between gender.

Viola's position as both male and female is further exemplified in later speeches, in which she repeatedly wavers between a self-perception that encompasses both genders. In discovering that Olivia has taken a romantic interest in Cesario, Viola despairs that:

> I am the man. If it be so, as 'tis,
>
> Poor lady, she were better love a dream.
>
> Disguise, I see thou art a wickedness
>
> wherein the pregnant enemy does much.
>
> How easy is it for the proper false
>
> In women's waxen hearts to set their forms!
>
> Alas, our frailty is the cause, not we,
>
> For such as we are made of, such we be…As I am man,
>
> My state is desperate for my master's love.
>
> As I am woman (now alas the day!),

what thriftless sighs shall poor Olivia breathe!

O Time, thou must untangle this, not I.

It is too hard a knot for me t' untie (2.2.25-41).

This speech reveals the nuances of Viola's view of her gender, as she speaks to the male and female experience from both perspectives. As Cesario, he declares that "As I am man, / My state is desperate for my master's love." This disguise is not limited to a veneer, but to Cesario is a "state," where he embodies the life of a man rather than imitating it. His description "as I am man" is also indicative of a mindset in which he is not "a man" but "man" itself, and so implies that he has been able to capture some quintessential element of being a man, in addition to his disguise as one. He not only expresses the male experience, but also, like any other man, is "the proper false" of Olivia's affections. Cesario is able to engage in the trope of the seductive but deceitful young man, and in doing so proves that Viola can successfully promote external views of her male persona in addition to her internal feelings. This language in the male persona is balanced, however, with her declaration in the persona of a woman. She parallels her thought on her male identity with the thought that "As I am woman (now alas the day!), / what thriftless sighs shall poor Olivia breathe." Viola here returns to embodying her female role, and once again refers to herself not as "a woman" but "woman," highlighting the universality of her female representation. She also simultaneously acts as the "proper false" and as a woman whose "frailty is the cause" of her consternation. Viola at once embodies the forms of a man and a woman in a physical sense in addition to her self-perception in the same vein. In this speech, Viola's language underscores the dual nature of her gender and the ways these genders manifest within her courtships.

Viola's youth is essential in understanding the way she displays the attributes of both male and female identities. Throughout *Twelfth Night,* various characters refer to Viola not as her chosen name Cesario, but as a "youth." Understanding the implications of this terminology is dependent on a thorough understanding of how youth was understood in Shakespeare's time. English Renaissance conceptions of gender, in which the female form is the inverse of male form, presents the opportunity for interpretations of the genders as ultimately stemming from the same source, emphasizing their similarities over their differences. Boys, who portrayed women on the Renaissance stage, were the middle ground between the male and female form. They were not wholly masculine; as Will Fisher argues in "The Renaissance Beard: Masculinity in Early Modern England." Fisher instead asserts that "Renaissance sources seek to construct an antithesis between men and boys through such gendered 'signs' as beard growth and generativity" (Fisher 178). Cesario notably lacks this facial hair, as several characters comment on throughout *Twelfth Night.* Viola's female sex then limits the extent to which she can embody the male gender, as the performative elements of masculinity outside of Viola's clothing are missing. But though several characters note Cesario's lack of masculine qualities, they also accept his apparent femininity as natural given his youth. Cesario's youth, and the way he straddles the line between masculine and feminine, lead to his eroticization by multiple characters. Lisa Jardine argues in her essay "Twins and Travesties Gender, Dependency and Sexual Availability in *Twelfth Night*," that boys and women were eroticized due to their submissive states, and that "for dependent youth, obedience was both a condition of their economic support, and an internalized state" (Jardine 23). As Cesario is subservient to both Orsino and Olivia in his role as a page, he is both youthful and performing activities that make that youth so erotically pleasing to the other characters of *Twelfth Night*. This youth then lends

itself to Cesario's attraction for various characters, as well as rationalizing his position as both genders.

Given these associations around youth, the many characters who refer to Cesario by this attribute imply their view of this page as ambiguously gendered. In response to Olivia's questions about the page at her gate, Malvolio describes Cesario as "not yet old enough for a man, nor young / enough for a boy- as a squash is before 'tis a / peascod, or a codling when 'tis almost an apple. 'Tis / with him in standing water, between boy and man" (1.5.155-159). His words make explicit the idea that Cesario exists within a gray area, between the unformed and the formed, and that he does not pass as a man in the strictly masculine sense to those around him. But Malvolio's description does not reveal any disquiet about Cesario's peculiar presentation outside the normal bounds of gender. Instead, he describes this presentation in terms of natural imagery, such as apples and the standing water between tides, in a way that naturalizes Viola's performance. This image of an apple once again makes an appearance near the end of *Twelfth Night*, when Antonio witnesses the reunion of Viola and Sebastian, exclaiming that "an apple cleft in two is not more twin / Than these two creatures" (5.1.234-235). This comment on their startlingly similar appearance brings Sebastian's own gender presentation in to question, because to mirror Viola is to exist in between in an indefinite state, as articulated earlier by Malvolio. The idea of this apple being "cleft in two," however, also implies a belief that these gender ambiguities go beyond the performative, and that their appearances are actually reflective of an inner duality that the other characters are now able to witness. Viola's position as both male and female is then not only evident to numerous characters throughout this play, but is also a source of interest in their attempts to reconcile this duality with their own ideas about youth and gender in development.

If the youth that Viola possesses enhances her eroticization as Cesario, it also has temporal implications in the idea that youth is uncorrupted by this time, implying a general perception of time as a destructive force. Olivia, in qualifying her rejection of Orsino with his admirable qualities, references his "fresh and stainless youth" (1.5.261). The terms "fresh" and "stainless" introduce an idea of youth as something pure and not yet subject to the ravages of time. If time will ultimately cause spoil or stains in its continuation, then youth is a lack of this detrimental temporality. But even as youth is attractive for its lack of temporal interference, it is also inherently temporary. After hearing the clock strike in scene three, Olivia culminates her wooing of Cesario with the comment that "when wit and youth is come to harvest, / Your wife is like to reap a proper man" (3.1.139-140). The idea that this youth that Olivia finds so attractive is also acknowledged by her to be a temporary state once again emphasizes the idea of time's tendency to curb such ambiguous states. Olivia also, however, acknowledges time's tendencies toward growth rather than destruction, as she compares youth to a crop that can be "harvested." Once again, Twelfth Night demonstrates a nuanced early modern perspective on time, as a fruitful and natural progression and as leading to an inevitable end. The youth that Viola displays as Cesario works to make him attractive to various characters even as they acknowledge its inevitable collapse in to age.

Viola's interest in personifying both genders begins upon her realization of her peculiar circumstances in Illyria, but throughout *Twelfth Night*, her subjective view of time presents itself as a general awareness of its role in fate, a fate she believes limits her excursions in to the androgynous. Even before donning her disguise, she acknowledges the way time may have a hand in her machinations. Viola ends her request to the captain to "conceal me what I am" by looking to how fate, specifically time, will influence this plan, saying "What else may hap, to

time I will commit. / Only shape thou thy silence to my wit (1.2.62-64). Her control, she concedes, only extends over what she can present with her physical form. Viola "commits" the circumstances of this gender ambiguity, however, to time. Her resignation, clear in this speech, displays her view of time as inherent within the structure of gender, as well as her feelings on how time has ultimate control over how this gender is perceived and responded to in Illyria.

As Cesario, Viola continues to invoke the machinations of time in reference to the various circumstances around her cross-dressing. Later in the play, when she considers her position as both a man and a woman in varying circumstances, she pleads "O Time, thou must untangle this, not I. / It is too hard a knot for me t' untie (2.2.40-41). Her metaphor for her situation being a knot, Viola highlights the ways her identities are seemingly inextricable. Her plea to time directly states a belief in time's abilities, as well as an awareness of its passage throughout *Twelfth Night.* Viola's faith in time as a regulatory force here is evident, as is her sense of a return to the gender binary, along with more clearly heterosexual relations. But while the play does indeed culminate in Olivia and Sebastian's marriage, the marriage between Viola and Orsino is only promised. Viola's "women's weeds," or clothing, are never returned. In his final words, Orsino orders that "Cesario, come; / For so you shall be, while you are a man; / But when in other habits you are seen, / Orsino's mistress and his fancy's queen (5.1.408-411). His reference to Viola as Cesario, and his insistence that in her current garments she remains a man, undercut the prophesized return to heterosexuality through time. Her garments, to the audience, never revert back to female-presenting, and so even as heterosexuality has once again become the defining relationship style of *Twelfth Night*, Viola's promised regulation of events by time's hand is only partly realized.

Viola's earlier protestations of her interest in cross-dressing for practical purposes are quickly overshadowed by her and others' language on how effectively she embodies the persona of both a man and a woman. Her references to how time will inevitably begin to police this suspension of binary gender, and the way she invokes the factor of time following her thoughts on the effects of her cross-dressing, emphasize her view of the close association between gender and temporality. But where this return to the majority heterosexual does materialize, this return, still taking place within the warped time of Illyria, is compromised by Viola's still ambiguous relationship to either gender, an ambiguity that informs her relationships throughout this play. Outside of this objective time, Viola crafts her own temporality around her gender exploration throughout *Twelfth Night,* and so demonstrates the relativity of time in the play overall. The English renaissance view of time as both regulatory and subject to individual interpretations are therefore on full display within the character of Viola/ Cesario.

Lady Olivia's Youthful Ambitions

This temporal relativity, combined with Viola's androgynous gender presentation, extends through her relationships with Olivia and Orsino. Her relationship with Olivia in particular is often influenced by Illyria's relative time. Like Viola, Olivia frequently recognizes the role of time within the social structures of Illyria, as she attempts to wield its lack of objectivity so as to encourage this courtship. She frequently delays Viola's rejections, and even restrains her own propensity for wooing in her hope of extending the duration of their relationship. The source of this effort is Olivia's attraction to Cesario, which she often references as stemming from his youth, and, consequently, his androgynous appearance. This youth also has temporal implications, as Cesario is relatively unaffected, in his young age, by time's potentially deteriorating effects. But even as time is manipulated by both parties throughout Cesario and

Olivia's courtship, its partial resurgence in act five effectively ends Olivia's abilities to express her homoerotic attractions, as her heterosexual union with Sebastian forces this attraction into the realm of heterosexuality. Olivia is intensely attracted to Cesario's youth and his resulting androgyny, and intensely aware of how temporality works within her homoerotic wooing, once more setting the homoerotism of *Twelfth Night* within a temporal framework.

On an individual level, Olivia views time as a tool for her homoerotic wooing of Cesario. Olivia, within her first interaction with the young page, must restrain herself from launching too quickly in to her courtship. She chastises herself to go "not too fast! Soft, / soft! Unless the master were the man" (1.5.299-300). Her impulse to launch in to her courtship is so strong that she must repeat "soft" twice, so as to convince herself of this idea. The force with which she reminds herself to slow down also implies her belief that if she is able to control her speed at which she enters in to courtship, she will be able to control the form of this courtship. Olivia continues in her attempts to slow the progress of this relationship, as she frequently redirects Cesario's rejections with entreaties for him to return the following day, imploring him with phrases such as "I beseech you come again tomorrow" (3.4.218). This plea follows Viola's increasingly frustrated attempts to redirect this affection toward her master Orsino, and also reveals the extent to which Olivia wants to delay their partings. If Olivia were to accept this rejection, she would have no reason to interact with Cesario in a way that satisfies her desires. She therefore utilizes time in delaying the effects of this rejection, consciously extending her impulse toward the homoerotic.

An additional use of these temporal statements is that they are often the only indication of time passing in Illyria, as one must assume that Viola's return following this statement connotes that a day has passed. The fact that the audience is given this temporal information almost

exclusively within this courtship further emphasizes their interconnected nature. At times, Olivia makes this connection even more explicit, as when the clock chimes and she tells Cesario that "the clock upbraids me with the waste of time. / Be not afraid, good youth, I will not have you. / And yet when wit and youth is come to harvest, / Your wife is like to reap a proper man" (3.1.137-140). Olivia, in this speech, personifies time as a regulatory figure, utilizing its passage, once again, for the sake of pushing her attraction. Her reference to Cesario as a "youth," and her implication that this youth will "come to harvest" also temporalizes Viola's attractive qualities, as her youth, as previously mentioned, is a major point of attraction for Olivia. This speech is made after a "clock strikes," the only instance in *Twelfth Night* in which such an event occurs. Of course, the audience is not given any indication of the exact hour, their understanding only extends to the idea that time is passing in a general sense. What little indications the audience is given as to how time is passing in Illyria are then given in service of developing the homoerotic relationships such as exist between Olivia and Cesario.

Olivia's frequent attempts to prolong her relationship with Cesario stem from a deep physical attraction, an attraction focused on Cesario's gender ambiguity through his youth. Throughout *Twelfth Night*, Olivia continually references Cesario's early age in language that emphasizes the value she places on this quality, using this to justify her seemingly desperate attempts to lengthen their courtship. Olivia's initial refusal to admit any suitors is broken by her attraction to Cesario's lack of fully formed masculinity. Upon hearing that there is someone at the gate, Olivia indicates her priorities in courtship by asking "of what personage and years is he?" Her attraction therefore rests on physical attraction and, as the audience later learns, a lack of years in her object of affection. Upon hearing that Cesario is "not yet old enough for a man, nor young / enough for a boy- as a squash is before 'tis a / peascod, or a codling when 'tis almost

an apple. ‘Tis / with him in standing water, between boy and man” (1.5.155-159), Olivia allows his entrance. Her interest is piqued by Cesario’s lack of pure masculinity, and the way he exists between states. As previously discussed, the eroticization of youth was by no means an uncommon occurrence, and Olivia’s interest here makes explicit the idea that this eroticization stems from the lack of full masculinity in this youth. Of course, the temporal implications are also evident, as the fact that Cesario exists in an unformed state, as yet untouched by time, indicates Olivia’s belief in the negative effects of temporality on one’s physical attributes. The Countess’s attraction begins and develops due to Cesario’s physical qualities stemming from his youth.

As this relationship develops, Olivia’s intense physical attraction to Cesario only becomes more explicit. In one of their later interactions, Viola soundly rejects Olivia’s offers of courtship, becoming increasingly frustrated with Olivia’s interest. In response to this anger, Olivia, aside, exclaims “O, what a deal of scorn looks beautiful / In the contempt and anger of his lip! / A murd’rous guilt shows not itself more soon / Than love that would seem hid. Love’s night is / noon.- / Cesario, by the roses of the spring, /By maidhood, honor, truth, and everything, / I love thee so” (3.1.152-158). Her acute expression of desire, in this speech, ties her delight in Cesario’s youth to her desire for his physical appearance. Viola’s anger presents itself most forcefully to Olivia in her lips, which Olivia imagines hides concealed affection. The idea of Cesario being broken down to his component parts, and the idea that these parts might harbor a secret love, is reminiscent of a sonnet. This theme is furthered in Olivia’s invocation of the “roses of the spring” and “by maidhood honor, truth, and everything,” which once again naturalizes Cesario’s gender ambiguity with words such as “roses” and “maidhood.” This youth then works for Olivia’s homoerotic attraction on various levels. She is attracted to Viola’s lack of

age and lack of temporal corruption, while also finding her masculine ambiguity through this lack of age to be physically attractive.

The time that Olivia so frequently wields in her wooing of Cesario also has the effect of guiding her to a quasi-heterosexual relationship by the end of *Twelfth Night*. Act five of the play features more concrete temporality, as the audience is finally given temporal exposition in the length of the play, as well as more quantifiable descriptions of the passing of time. Where the only previous clues as to the passage of time had been Viola's meetings with Cesario, in act five the priest informs the assemblage that Olivia and Sebastian's marriage had happened "since when, my watch hath told me, toward my / grave / I have traveled but two hours" (5.1.170-172). This comment, and Antonio's speeches to the same effect, quantify time in act five and therefore signal a return to more regulated temporality. This return of time has consequences for Olivia's homoerotic urges, as she learns that instead of marrying Cesario, she has instead married Viola's brother Sebastian. Her satisfaction with this marriage is difficult to measure, as Olivia becomes strangely silent following this revelation. Her direct response, "most wonderful!" is largely dependent on performance for its tone, and Olivia's attention moves to the mystery of Malvolio's treatment before she can elaborate on her true feelings. Instead of addressing her husband, she addresses the idea of her connection to Viola, exclaiming "a sister! You are she" (5.1.344). Olivia's attempts to define a continuing connection between her and Viola demonstrate the importance she places on this relationship, even after she has conceded that Viola is indeed a "she." Sebastian, in explaining how fortunate Olivia is to have avoided a marriage to a woman, also assures her that "you are betrothed to both a maid and man" (5.1.275). The explicit meaning, of course, points to Sebastian's virginity as making him both "maid and man," but his comment also points to the way in which Olivia may be assured that her partner is in fact just as

androgynously gendered as Viola. Viola and Sebastian, after all, are an "apple cleft in two," and therefore it can be assumed that Sebastian shares some of his sister's ambiguity in gender. While Olivia is betrothed to a man, this man mirrors the androgyny of her intended partner, marking a partial, but ultimately incomplete, return to heterosexuality. This partial return correlates with act five's more concrete temporality, as the ambiguous time of the rest of *Twelfth Night* is exchanged for quantified time and its resulting tendency toward the heterosexual.

Olivia and Cesario's relationship, like Antonio and Sebastian's, utilizes time for the expression of homoerotic urges. The Countess, deciding that she is wildly attracted to Cesario, perpetuates her courtship through delays and references to time. This utilization of time reveals Olivia's perspective of this concept as a force that can encourage homoerotic sentiment, and, indeed, it is through her utilization that the audience is given the most sense of time passing in Illyria. Cesario's youth is another type of temporality that factors in to his and Olivia's courtship, as this youth assures Olivia that Cesario is yet untouched by the ravages of time. This youth, aside from its temporal benefits, also lacks the full masculinity of Orsino and is bound up with early modern erotic connotations. Time is an essential factor of this courtship, as both Olivia and Viola's subjective experiences work to perpetuate its homoerotic nature. Olivia is forced to yield to the return of objective time in her marriage to Sebastian, but her intense physical attraction to youth, and youth's homoerotic connotations, never fades.

Petrarchan Homoerotics: Orsino and Viola

Viola and Orsino's courtship is similarly centered around the way time can encourage or curb homoerotic attraction, though the way this temporality is explored is distinct from the relationship between Cesario and Olivia. Within *Twelfth Night's* first speech, Orsino dramatizes love's susceptibility to change, as he complains that love "falls into abatement and low price /

Even in a minute" (1.1.14-15). Orsino's preoccupation with the performance of Petrarchan love means that he is also preoccupied with how this love can change rapidly. Indeed, this love for Olivia, performed at a distance and through the medium of messengers, is quickly discarded when Orsino is able to transfer his Petrarchan heterosexuality to Viola, with whom he has developed an intimate dialogue. Though Orsino agrees to transfer this affection with the assurance that Viola is a woman, her continuing lack of female presentation results in a compromised heterosexuality marking the end of *Twelfth Night*.

Orsino, in the beginning of *Twelfth Night*, declares his intentions to woo Olivia, but it is his performance in this regard that ultimately forms the basis of his attraction to his androgynous page. This tendency to woo from a distance, and his tendency to wallow in the pangs of unrequited love, all weaken Orsino's supposed commitment to the heterosexuality he professes. In "Glimpsing a "Lesbian" Poetics in *Twelfth Night,"* Jami Ake bases her article on the assertion that "Orsino's penchant for a particularly self-indulgent kind of Petrarchan language and to observe that his excessive speeches betray his desire not for Olivia, but for love itself and for the poetry conventionally used to profess it" (Ake 376). Orsino's true love, Ake asserts, is the role of the lover, rather than the intended beloved. He himself emphasizes this fact, asking Viola to "make not compare / Between that love a woman can bear me / And that I owe Olivia" (2.4.111-113). Orsino, earlier in this speech, compares his love to the sea, and in doing so emphasizes his large capacity for love, but also, tacitly, the idea that Illyria's associations with the sea, in all its untamed temporality, factor in to this setting's many courtships. Viola, in engaging, expanding, and challenging Orsino's perceptions of love, often diverts him from empty Petrarchan professions in to real discussions about each gender's capacity for affection. Rather than

emphasizing the deepness of the traditional heterosexual courtship, this play is more concerned with the various comedic aspects and contradictions of Orsino and Olivia's heterosexuality.

Though Orsino is intensely invested in performing the role of the male lover to the female object, his relationship with Viola reveals a latent attraction beyond what he is able to foster with Olivia. The first days of Viola's service to him are not shown to the audience, but his first spoken words to his new page are "Thou know'st no less but all. I have unclasped / To thee the book even of my secret soul" (1.4.14-15). Orsino, in this quote, introduces the idea that he keeps hidden his most essential self, which he represents as a book hiding his "secret soul." The fact that he has "unclasped" that book for Viola then speaks to a deep intimacy, and dispenses with Orsino's inclination for performance when it comes to his new page. Orsino, even as he emphasizes Olivia's beauty, also recognizes Viola's attractive physical qualities, saying "Diana's lip / is not more smooth and rubious, thy small pipe / is as the maiden's organ, shrill and sound, / And all is semblative a woman's part" (1.4.34-37). Viola, as well as Olivia, embodies the feminine traits that Orsino is interested in highlighting in his overtures. Her lip, as "Diana's lip" is similar to that of a goddess, and therefore unattainably perfect, in Orsino's eyes. Her "small pipe" is equally feminine, and relates her abilities to the musicality of love that Orsino finds so compelling. Orsino lists these traits in reference to how they will endear Olivia, but in doing so emphasizes Viola's similarities in attractiveness to the Countess. Viola, of course, professes her love for Orsino in numerous scenes, often exclaiming her wish for a heterosexual conclusion in statements like "Yet a barful strife! / Who'oer I woo, myself would be his wife" (1.4.45-46). Viola specifically envisions a marital relationship with herself in the female role as Orsino's wife, a dream she cannot help but imply in her words to Orsino himself when she explains her hypothetical sister's love "as it might be, perhaps, were I a woman, / I should your lordship"

(2.4.119-120). She imagines a heterosexual relationship, recognizing Orsino's clear inclination for the classical Petrarchan courtship between a man and a woman. The attraction between Orsino and Viola is evident throughout *Twelfth Night*, limited only by Orsino's commitment to his ideal, though often perfunctory, heterosexual courtship of Olivia.

Both Orsino and Viola are concerned with love's temporality in terms of its duration. Within his first speech, Orsino laments that love, in its excess, often "falls into abatement and low price / Even in a minute" (1.1.14-15). Though he evidently enjoys the experience of wooing, Orsino worries that it loses its value within "a minute," marking his view of love as strongly affected by temporality. Viola shares Orsino's anxieties about the way love can be influenced by duration. Upon hearing of Orsino's increasing affection for her, Viola worriedly asks: "is / he inconstant, sir, in his favors?" (1.4.6-7). These favors, of course, are a matter of necessity for the stranded Viola, but her sexual interest that she reveals later in the scene also mark this question as the insecurity of a pining lover. As their relationship progresses, this mutual understanding of love's ephemerality prompts gendered discussions between master and servant, as they debate how men and women can resist love's inevitable capitulation to the ravages of time. Orsino, within one scene, asserts two opposite doctrines on women's ability to love. He first contends that "our fancies are more giddy and unfirm, / More longing, wavering, sooner lost and worn" (2.4.39-40). The idea that love can be exhausted or "worn" highlight's Orsino's association of love with time's deteriorating effects. By the end of the scene, however, Orsino has embodied this very changeability in reversing his view, stating that it is in fact women who "lack retention. / Alas, their love may be called appetite, / No motion of the liver, but the palate / that suffer surfeit, cloyment, and revolt" (2.4.106-109). His idea that women are subject to their appetites associates this feminine love with base urges rather than the ideal he so highly prizes. His words

here, spoken to his "male" page, also cast doubt on Orsino's true belief in Olivia's ability to reciprocate his affections. Viola contends that it is, in fact, men who are inconstant, and so this debate presents varying theories on how men and women can express love in response to time's influence. Like many other characters in *Twelfth Night*, Orsino and Viola are thinking about how time works within both genders and their relationships with each other.

Part of time's limited return in act five is Orsino's promise of marriage to the still cross-dressed Viola, after he demonstrates the ephemeral love he so feared in quickly transferring his affections to his page. Orsino, even before the revelation of Viola's genders, expresses his affection for her within his planned revenge against Olivia. He asks incredulously if he really must "kill what I love?" in order to spite Olivia, and while describing this revenge once again asserts that Cesario is someone that "by heaven I swear, I tender dearly" (5.1.121-133). His repeated assertions of affection, spoken in the middle of a plan to kill the object of that affection, highlight the intensity of this fondness. He quite literally questions how much he can prioritize the love of a woman over his love for his page, a love that, by invoking heaven, he proves is genuinely important to him. Upon learning of Viola's supposed womanhood, and therefore her potential for formal courtship, Orsino quickly discards his wooing of Olivia in favor of his former page. This, or course, is based only on the potential of Viola's femininity, as the Captain who holds her dresses is absent. Orsino therefore promises himself to his page who still very much embodies a man's appearance. Orsino acknowledges this in addressing Viola thusly: "Cesario, come, / For so you shall be while you are man. / But when in other habits you are seen, / Orsino's mistress, and his fancy's queen" (5.1.408-411). In this speech, Orsino asserts Viola's continuing masculinity by still referring to her as "Cesario." He hints at her potential for femininity as related to her "habits," and therefore as malleable as Viola herself sees her own

femininity. While there is the promise of a heterosexual relationship between Viola and Orsino, Viola's continuing presentation as a man marks the beginning of this union as distinctly homoerotic, limiting the effects of time's regulatory functions, and once again demonstrating the way time and relaxed constraints around genders and sexualities are directly correlated.

Orsino and Viola's relationship is, like all the other relationships in *Twelfth Night*, homoerotic in tone and predicated on subjective temporality. Orsino's wooing of Olivia, more than anything else, contrasts with his less performative and more genuinely affectionate interactions with Viola. As an object for Petrarchan expressions of love, Olivia is Orsino's explicit target, and yet he often uses the same terms of love to describe his page, and readily transfers this love to Viola once it becomes clear that, as a woman, she can fulfill the role of the Petrarchan love interest. The interactions that Orsino and Viola engage in, in the meantime, work dually in advancing their intimacy and also introducing a view of time as destructive to both male and female love. To Orsino and Viola, the temporality of Illyria is inherently gendered, as they argue over which gender feels time's effects more acutely in performing love.

Time, Gender, and Homoeroticism: Conclusions

Given the heightened awareness of time on a daily basis in the early modern era, concurrent with varying philosophies on how time functioned on a theoretical level, time's complicated functions throughout this play are hardly surprising. *Twelfth Night*, as set in Illyria, does not contain one objective time. Set on an ancient coast, with the temporal isolation of the seas, the setting of *Twelfth Night* primes its audience to shake off regulatory perceptions of time and to embrace temporality as inherently fragmented between individual interpretation. Time exists relative to this setting and Illyria's inhabitants throughout this play. It exists in references to the passage of time, in appeals to time's abilities, as a force to be manipulated or suspended,

and as a limiting factor on characters' freedom. The individual interpretations and utilizations of time are endless, and yet the common thread of its appearances is clear. Temporality is woven through every characters' explorations of gender and sexuality in *Twelfth Night*.

The homoerotic relationships and gender presentations of *Twelfth Night's* characters exist as a result of this relative temporality, and necessarily reflect this altered time as they move through the play. Sebastian and Antonio, hurled in to Illyria by the sea, form a homoerotic bond that is evident in their declarations of devotion to each other. Time permeates every level of their relationship. They credit time for the formation of their intimacy, as their desperate circumstances over their three months traveling result in a deep bond. After arriving in Illyria, their relationship shifts to an understanding that in the absence of an objective time, their homoerotic relationship can be prolonged through time's manipulation. Though this relationship is curbed in act five as objective time begins to return, their expressions of sexual desire are indicative of a deeper bond than any expression made by Sebastian toward his new wife Olivia. Sebastian and Antonio therefore reveal different perceptions of time, as a powerful force that grants space for homoerotic love and something malleable enough to perpetuate this love.

Viola, in her role as Cesario, leaves behind a binary view of her female gender and instead embodies a dually gendered "youth." To both Olivia and Orsino, this youth is attractive due to its lack of definitive masculinity or femininity. For Olivia, it is Cesario's lack of masculinity that sways her to admit his suit. She continues to reference her attraction to this youth, and so reveals a lack of interest in strictly heterosexual relations. Orsino also references Viola's androgyny, as he comments on Cesario's beautiful components in a move reflective of the sonnets he so adores. This gender ambiguity, and the resulting attraction of Orsino and Olivia, are not immune to time's effects. The very "youth" that the characters find so compelling

in Cesario is a temporal concept, as is the awareness of the ill effects that time will eventually have on this youth. Indeed, outside of Viola's gender presentation, time becomes integral to this homoerotic triangle. Olivia, in recognition of time's relativity, continually seeks to extend her wooing of Cesario despite his refusals, and wields time in doing so. To Orsino, time is inherently gendered, as either men or women (depending on his current mood) are more susceptible to time's negative effects on their attractions. Time, therefore, just like for Antonio and Sebastian, is the impetus for these homoerotic urges, just as it is woven through their continuing interactions.

Time does "untangle" the knot of Viola's predicament, but it also facilitates this predicament in its loosened restrictions around Illyria. This lack of objective time, though common in Shakespeare's works, is balanced by an emphasis on how time is continually present in varying forms in Illyria and the sea that instigates so much of the plot of this play. *Twelfth Night*, with its peculiar setting, deserves just as much scholarly attention for its nuanced presentations of time, gender, and sexuality as does, say, *As You Like It* receives for its "greenworld."

Time frames these narratives of homoeroticism and gender ambiguity just as it is woven through them. The two themes of this paper, temporality and gender/sexuality, have been presented as interwoven throughout *Twelfth Night*. In understanding how these themes function in an intertwined manner, it is possible to understand how they work on the larger scale of Shakespeare's works as distinct ideas, and as a reflection of their place in the early modern consciousness. This play, in reveling in a lack of structured time, gender, and sexual attraction, illuminates their nuanced place in Shakespearean literature.

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